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In a letter to Friederike Oeser, dated Febr. 13, 1769,³ Goethe writes: "Zwey Jahre bey nahe, binn ich in Ihrem Hause herumgegangen, und ich habe Sie fast so selten gesehen, als ein Nachforschender *Magus* einen Alraun pfeifen hört." The meaning here of the words "einen Alraun pfeifen hört" (the verb *pfeifen* used in the sense of *quicken*, i. e., einen schrillen Ton von sich geben) is best illustrated by a line in *Romeo and Juliet* (iv, 3, 47):

And shrieks like mandrakes', torn out of the earth,

and similar passages from English literature quoted by Starck, pp. 51 and 52.

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OLD FRENCH *terne*, *ternir*

There has been considerable doubt regarding the etymology of Old French *terne*, *ternir* and consequently of the Eng. 'tarnish' which is derived from the latter. The etymon given by most dictionaries is the Old High German *tarni*, which was first proposed by Diez. One of the objections to this form has been the late appearance of the French words. The earliest examples cited by Godefroy, Littré and the *Dictionnaire Général* are from works of the fifteenth century. The editor of the last-named publication states that the relatively recent date of the French words renders doubtful their connection with the OHG. *tarni*. The same objection is raised in the *New English Dictionary* in a discussion of the source of 'tarnish.' The earliest example given of the latter dates from 1598.

In preparing an edition of the Old French poem, *La Vie de Ste. Euphrosine*, I have discovered the form *ternie* in the best manuscript of that work, the famous Canon. Misc. 74 of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This manuscript has been described by Paul Meyer,¹ who dates it in the first years of the thirteenth century. The poem itself was probably written not later than 1200. The passage which concerns us is as follows:

U est la blanche face? Mut est descolerie,
La vostre bele boche mut est ternie et palie. Vv. 1165, 6.

The second verse is metrically imperfect, but may be corrected by omitting *mut*, which may well be a scribal repetition of the form in the preceding verse. Another emendation would be to retain

³ *Goethe's Werke*, Weimar edition, Abt. IV. (Briefe), Bd. I, p. 190, or *Der junge Goethe*, Neue Ausg., Bd. I (1909), p. 318.

¹ *Documents manuscrits*, pp. 145-150.

mut and read *terne*. However, the past participles *descolorie* and *palie* render *ternie* preferable. Whichever solution be adopted, it is evident that either *terne* or *ternie* was used in Old French as early as 1200, more than two centuries before the earliest examples cited up to this time. Thus one objection to the derivation from OHG. *tarni* is removed. In the example quoted above *ternir* has its usual meaning, 'to lose the brilliancy of color.' It is therefore more or less synonymous with *descolorie* (cf. *desculuret e pale*, Roland, 1979).

Other objections to deriving the word from OHG. *tarni*, both on account of the form and the meaning, have been voiced by Bugge (*Rom.* iv, 366). According to him, the etymon proposed by Diez does not satisfy, because most of the Germanic words adopted in French have been borrowed through the intermediary of the Frankish, where initial *t* > *d*, so we should expect *tarni* > *darne*. However, it is not necessary to suppose that all French words of Germanic origin are borrowed in this way. There are quite a number of French words undoubtedly of Germanic origin in which initial *t* has been preserved; such are *tette* (Germ. *titta*), *tique* (Germ. *tick*), *tarir* (Germ. *tharrjan*), etc. The existence of these and other forms shows that Germ. initial *t* may remain *t* in the French derivative.

The other reason for not connecting *terne* with *tarni* is that the latter means 'covered up,' 'veiled'; cf. *tarn-hut*, *tarn-kappe* = 'a mantle which renders invisible.' Yet the transition of meaning to a special application to light or color is not great. A 'veiled' light becomes a 'pale' light, brilliance when covered becomes 'dimmed.' It is not so much the question of a change of meaning, but rather the restriction to a particular limited use.

Another etymon proposed by Scheler and favored by Bugge is **tetrinus* < *teter*. As far as the meaning is concerned, this seems to me less satisfactory than the one we have discussed. The regular signification of Lat. *taeter* is 'offensive,' 'foul,' 'repulsive.' In Late Latin, to be sure, it sometimes means 'dark.' However, the OF. *terne* has primarily the meaning of 'without color,' 'pale,' 'wan,' as in the passage already quoted, rather than that of 'repulsive,' or 'dark.'

Whether all the arguments in favor of deriving *terne*, *ternir* from *tarni* be accepted or not, it is certain that *ternir* was used in French as early as 1200, and that at that time it had the same meaning it has today.

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